

**An Effective Model of Church Ministry  
for Divorced Young Adults in Korea**

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Ministry

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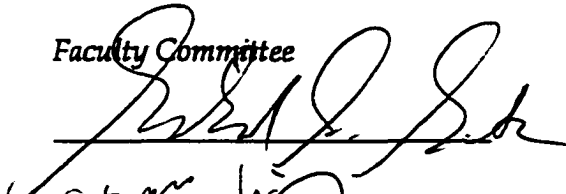

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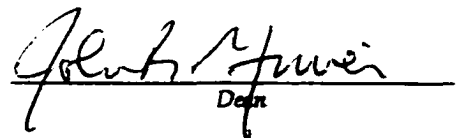
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## ABSTRACT

### An Effective Model of Church Ministry for Divorced Young Adults in Korea

by

Won Seok Sim

This thesis deals with the issue of an effective ministry for divorced young adults in Korea. Most Korean churches and pastors recognize that they need a church ministry model for divorced young adults in Korea. Many Korean scholars and pastors are prone to prohibit divorced people from actively participating in the life of the church because scholars and pastors perceive this as God's will.

One of the major obstacles to ministering to divorced young adults in Korea is the secular view of the world. Most Korean adults grew up in the Confucian culture, a patriarchal system. This means that women are marginalized and are powerless people in Korean society. In this system, divorce does not exist because women do not have rights as humans, the constituting members of society. However, contemporary young adults grow up in a culture influenced by the Western lifestyle, which has a

system that believes men and women are equal. Divorce is a common thing for young adults as a choice for a better life. The Korean churches and their pastors should work on overcoming the generation gap in the conception of divorce.

In ancient times women did not have the same rights as they have now. Moses put the law in the book of Deuteronomy to protect women's rights. St. Paul in his letters shows that men and woman have equal rights as human beings because God makes us as equal creatures, and that men and woman are both children of God.

Current Korean congregations, in order to prepare for God's work, must face two conflicting problems in Korean society: the cultural values held by its older members, and the reality of a rapid increase in the annual divorce rate.

The Korean church needs to provide a social-spiritual shelter for divorced young adults who, otherwise, would not associate with Korean congregations. If provided shelter, the divorced young adults will stay as vital members to the church, which then will make a brighter future for the Korean church.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Problem Addressed

The problem addressed by this project is to understand the role of the Korean church and its ministry to divorced young adults in Korea. This issue has emerged out of a friend's experience in the church. Even though he was a vital member to the church, he left his church after his divorce because he wanted to avoid the "people's eyes." At that time, my friend asked me: What is the role of the church for divorced young adults? How can I, as a pastor, tend to their needs?

Existing models in Korean ministry are not effective for divorced young adults with contemporary worldviews. Many of the divorced young adults tend to leave the church because they do not feel at peace in or comforted by most Korean churches. For example, most Korean pastors and their congregations do not keep track of the changing social

transformations, ideas, and values of society, especially those among the younger generation. Yet divorce, nowadays, is common among the younger generation in Korea. This tendency for divorce makes ministry difficult for Korean pastors and churches because divorce is not seen as supported by the biblical text. This study intends to contribute to an understanding of what the Bible says about divorce, and how Western countries have dealt with divorced people throughout history.

The project also intends to point out how divorced young adults can coexist with other church members who have a negative perspective on divorce, and at the same time be vital members of the church. This project is designed to show an effective model of ministry for divorced young adults.

### Importance of the Problem

Due to the current situations, many divorced young adults are less involved in congregational activities because their needs are not being met in the church or community



activities. This is as if the comfort for the children of God is only provided for the married and non-divorced people, and the church neglects the divorced.

The divorce rate has been increasing rapidly. Each year the number almost doubles from the previous year. The problem of divorced young adults has already become an issue for society and the church. Divorced young adults struggle with the traditional prejudice against divorce within their families and the work places. If Korean churches turn their backs on the divorced, the divorced will eventually leave the Korean Church altogether.

The Bible says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 19:19).<sup>1</sup> I think this is one of the most important concepts for Christians because divorced young adults are indeed our neighbors. If there is division within the society of Christians, it is implausible for people to be good Christians. When all are one in Jesus Christ, then the Kingdom of God can be established on Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise specified.

As a matter of fact, divorce in Korean society and the church has been a taboo, because divorce has been noted as a sin to individual's ancestors and the church.

Traditionally in Korean society, it is the man who takes the initiative for divorce. In ancient times, if a woman divorced her husband, her family and neighbors would ostracize her because divorce was regarded as the result of her sin. However, nowadays, one out of three marriages ends up in divorce in Korea. Statistics show that divorce in Korea is becoming more tolerable in the present time.

Nevertheless, in general, the Korean church does not think of the divorced young adult as the object of the church's love and concern. If we overlook this generalized notion on the divorced, the divorced young adults will leave the church for another supportive environment. With this awareness, this project is seen as a way to develop an effective model of ministry for divorced young adults. By properly using this model, an effective ministry can be developed to help a divorced young adult to be active in

religious activities and become an active member in the main body of the Korean church. The divorced, as well as the non-divorced, desire to grow spiritually and eventually become lay leaders. Also they want to feel peace with and comfort in the Korean church.

### Thesis

By providing a social-spiritual shelter, divorced young adults, who otherwise would not associate with church congregations, will stay as vital members of a congregation.

I will deal with how Korean churches can be shelters for divorced young adults. I have two main concerns about this issue. How can Korean churches become the social and the spiritual shelters in the Korean context?

### Definitions of Major Terms

There are terms in the project, which are used frequently, that need to be defined clearly for a better understanding of the concepts in the subsequent chapters.

Divorced Young Adults: Robert T. Gribbon and others state that the age group of young adults is between 18 and 40

years. Gribbon especially focuses on baby-boomers in the young adult group.<sup>2</sup> However, my definition of the young adult group is the people in the age range of 25 and 35 years old. In the Korean context, many young people are completely dependent on their parents until they get a job after graduating from college. As such many of the older people tend to think that 35 years old is still young; only those thirty-five and over are acknowledged as nature adults. For this reason, I classify young adults to be between 25 and 35 years old.

Shelter: Generally, shelter means a structure that provides privacy and protection from danger. A person is able to enjoy a sense of peace and protection in his/her new home. Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11: 28-29).

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<sup>2</sup> R.T. Gribbon, Developing Faith in Young Adults: Effective Ministry with 18-35 Year Olds (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1990), 1.

I think that the church should be a place that gives peace and rest to both Christians and non-Christians in their hearts and souls, as it was in Jesus' word in Matt. 11: 28-29. Even though the church has many programs for the congregation and its community, the church should also show more concern and a modest attitude in becoming a "safe place" for the divorced. If this is God's way and a real goal of the church then the church can become a real shelter for people, especially during such difficult times as a divorce.

#### Work Previously Done in the Field

The work in the field of caring for the divorced young adult has concentrated on the healing of wounded hearts through the love of God. Many scholars have dealt with most parts of the divorce experience, but pastoral counseling and care have particularly concentrated on the divorce experience. Paul Bohannon explains that divorce has multi-layers experiences of separation. He calls it "six overlapping experiences":

- (1) the emotional divorce, which centers around the problem of the deteriorating marriage;
- (2) the legal divorce, based on grounds;
- (3) the economic divorce,

which deals with money and property; (4) the co-parental divorce, which deals with custody, single-parent homes, and visitation; (5) the community divorce, surrounding the changes of friends and community that every divorce experiences; and (6) the psychic divorce, with the problem of regaining individual autonomy.<sup>3</sup>

Bohannon compels me to rethink several aspects of divorce.

When I thought of divorced people, I understood them with the point of view of only the emotional divorce, the legal divorce, and the co-parental divorce. The theory of "six overlapping experiences" gives me the chance to have different perspectives on the works on divorced young adults. Furthermore, I would like to extend the issue of divorce to the understanding of a tendency of acceptable within the young adult life-style.

William J. Goode states that divorce is extrication from unavoidable tension, so that it is dealt as a social life-style.<sup>4</sup> Young adults tend to think that divorce is one aspect of their life-styles that comes from high education,

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Bohannon, "The Six Station of Divorce," in Divorce and After, ed. Paul Bohannon (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1970), 34.

<sup>4</sup> William J. Goode, World Revolution and Family Patterns (New York: Free Press, 1970), 191.

better economic work, and independent life style of women.

Douglas Johnson states, "Today's young couples are more sophisticated, more affluent, and better educated than any former generation. As a result, they are more pragmatic, more realistic, and more willing to be in conflict than older folks."<sup>5</sup> Johnson's statement has led me to pay particular attention to the role of the church as a supportive agent for the next generation. One thing the church can do for the next generation is to help divorced young adults to realize that God does not condemn them nor has God abandoned them.

For Karl Barth, divorced people are open to God's grace through repentance. Barth has shown how divorced people are especially open to God's grace. He says to the Christian community,

When these men and women have had to taste to the dregs the bitter cup of divine condemnation, it will be all the more eager to point them to the gospel and the

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas W. Johnson, Ministry with Young Couples (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 45.

divine command, to God's promise and Yes. It will be ready to be called itself with these sinners to repentance.<sup>6</sup>

The Apostle Paul states, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The faith of Christians is to believe that Jesus Christ saves us from sin and death. Even though the divorced were broken and shattered by the guilt and the hopelessness of an unforgettable failure in the process of divorce, they are not far from God's love-divorced people can be saved! In addition, the church can teach divorced young adults that they are forgiven.

Richard Lyon Morgan insists,

The Christian gospel affirms that no one can go so far in sin as to be completely beyond God's forgiveness and compassion. Even when the love of the prodigal son and the older brother for each other failed, the father's love was there for both.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Barth, On Marriage (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 41.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Lyon Morgan, Is There Life After Divorce in the Church? (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 67.



Morgan's statement provides an insight into how church members can resolve the tension between divorced people and other church members. Resolving tension is important in coexisting with others as vital members of the church.

If the church cannot find harmony between the divorced and the non-divorced, church cannot be a shelter for them.

David A. Thompson says,

The Christian community is faced with a great challenge: Divorce presents an opportunity for the family of God, enabled by the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, to demonstrate to a hostile world its greatest attribute--concern for one another. In this moment of testing, the church is at its best--portraying God's kind of love--unmerited, but unlimited.<sup>8</sup>

As Thompson says, we are faced with a great challenge today as Christians. How can we show God's love in our community and church? He points out that we should have concerns for each other, because it is an expression of God's unlimited love.

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<sup>8</sup> David A. Thompson, Counseling and Divorce (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), 124.

### Scope and Limitations of the Project

In this project, I will attempt to show how Korean churches may educate divorced young adults and other church members to be in coexistence with each other, without any prejudicial view of divorce, as good Christians. I will also develop a program to teach church members.

However, I must state that I have some limitations dealing with this issue. Primarily, most Koreans have a tendency to regard divorce as a taboo. Koreans culture is still heavily influenced by that notion.

Second, throughout history, the church and society have a system of circulation, so that when some church members leave the church newcomers come into the church, replacing those who have left. Hence, I would like to show how the church can continually educate existing members and newcomers in order to improve the relationship between divorced young adults and other church members so that the two groups can effectively work together.

Third, the children of the divorced young adults also go through some difficulties with their parents' divorce. This is an important issue with divorce, but I will not deal with the issue of children in this project. It is too complex of an issue to deal with here.

Consequently, in this project I will focus on how the young adults who are divorced and those who are not divorced can be in harmony with each other as members of the family of faith. I have already indicated the age range of young adults in the definitions of major terms.

#### Procedure for Integration

This project introduces practical suggestions for a more effective and powerful ministry for divorced young adults in Korea, through many cases with perspectives based on biblical understanding. Fortunately, I was able to find a lot of statistics which are related to the divorce rate in Korea, historical resources on the Internet, and theological resources through several books.

I have used the resources I found in three ways.

First, I have analyzed the current social and church situations on divorce by using the learning from several books and statistics. Second, I conducted interviews and church visitations. Third, I proposed practical plans consisting of several steps for divorced young adults and other church members in a medium size of church of about 500 adult members. This project also integrates available resources, the author's experience, and the Korean situation.

## Chapter 2

### General Understanding for Divorce

#### Divorce

When we say, "divorce," we think of legal divorce.

Legal divorce means, "An act of the discharge of all contracts by marriage between husband and wife even though they are still in existence."<sup>1</sup> It is different from becoming automatically extinct by the death of a partner.

Experts view divorce differently. William J. Goode says that divorce is a way of escape from the tension in married life. Paul Bohannon explains divorce with six different experiences of separation. He calls it "six overlapping experiences";<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Beal deals with it as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Bae, Kyung Sook, Women and Law [in Korean] (Seoul: Legalization Printing, 1997), 421.

<sup>2</sup> Bohannon explains the "six overlapping experiences" as: (1) the emotional divorce, (2) the legal divorce, (3) the economic divorce (4) the co-parental divorce, (5) the community divorce, and (6) the psychic divorce.

Families present for therapy around the decision to separate or divorce in a variety of ways. Some of the typical presentations include one "good spouse" and one "bad spouse," or one functional spouse and the other dysfunctional (socially, physically, emotionally, or with serious debilitating problems such as alcoholism).<sup>3</sup>

We can see a general transition of recognition for divorce through the six overlapping experiences and Edward W. Beal's conception. So, what is the problem? Young people tend to think divorce is a way of achieving a better life. Namely, marriage and divorce are equal opportunities for a happy life. At the present time, we have to think seriously about divorce even though this is in conflict with traditional views.

### Historical Understanding of Divorce

#### Transition of Divorce in Western Community

The husband in the patriarchal family system of ancient times, the husband had absolute authority over divorce. Due to the influence of Christianity, a rebellion occurred in Europe during the Middle Ages to change the

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<sup>3</sup> Edward W. Beal, "Separation, Divorce, and Single-Parent Families," in The Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy, ed. Elizabeth A. Carter and Monica McGoldrick (New York: Gardner Press, 1980), 246.

divorce system. Divorce was legally prohibited from the whole area of Europe around the tenth century.

Later on, as people brought up the issue of giving permission to divorce, the Roman church allowed a limited form of divorce. After the Reformation in the sixteenth century, if an important reason for divorce was well stated, a man could divorce his wife with the permission of the government.

The present law in Western communities permits a divorce by agreement. This shows an improvement of women's status in society. Divorce was one of the pathological phenomenon in the 1950-60s. Namely, a divorced person could not sustain marriage life because of his/her own problem. In the 1970s, divorce was a new way of self-discovery and freedom from the experience of an unhappy marriage, discord, and stress. This phenomenon was due to improvement in women's status and self-esteem.

In the 1980s, reasons for divorce were depression, anger, and the ease of the legal process. Also, the stigma

of being divorced was now obsolete so that the negative social view of divorced persons became a non-issue. Today, many people think that divorce is one way to get out of an unhappy and a painful relationship.

### Transition of Divorce in Korea

Korea in its history has very few records on actual accounts of divorce. I will deal with the transitions of the common law and legal restrictions regarding divorce in Korea.

In the period of the three Kingdoms (37 B.C. — A.D. 653), men could not rashly divorce their wives because of a moral sense of Confucianism. Women did not have any right to divorce in the kingdom of Sinla (57 B.C. — A.D. 935), an ancient Korean Kingdom posterior to the period of the three Kingdoms. During this period the high class did not approve of divorce.

As the kingdom of Sinla weakened, a new kingdom called Koryo (890 A.D. — A.D. 1392) was born. During the period of Koryo, men could divorce their wives at anytime with parental



permission, without any interruption. Women did not have any voice or rights to protect themselves from divorce. Around 120 years ago, the government of Korea strictly limited divorce because of Confucianism. The government set standards for divorce and came up with seven valid causes and three invalid causes for a divorce. Those seven valid causes for divorce are as follow: sterility, an obscene act, loquacity, a malignant disease, jealousy, unfilial behavior, and theft. An obscene act, a malignant disease, and unfilial behavior were the main reasons for divorce out of the seven valid causes. If a wife were to have the three invalid causes for divorce, the husband could not divorce the wife even though she qualifies for the seven valid causes for divorce. The three invalid causes for divorce were: (1) when the woman has a three-year memorial service for her husband's parents; (2) when the man's family become rich after marrying the woman; (3) and when the woman does not have her maiden home to go back to after divorce. However,

if the man strongly insisted on divorce, he could divorce her even though she had all the three invalid causes for divorce.<sup>4</sup>

The equality of gender was insisted on by the influence of Western civilization, especially Christianity, after the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. If one of the partners violated a responsibility of marriage, the court of Japan allowed legal divorce within abstract reason of divorce.<sup>5</sup>

### Social Understanding of Divorce

#### View of Divorce

There are three viewpoints on the issue of divorce today. First, some people see divorce with a preconception. Traditionally, Koreans have a strong sense of family values. Family is more valued than individual happiness or opinion because family stability, permanency, and relationship is more highly regarded. Family members follow the decisions

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<sup>4</sup> Kim, Yong Sook, Korean Asoksa [in Korean] (Seoul: Minumsa, 1990), 186.

<sup>5</sup> Kim, Hyae Sun. Family Relationships [in Korean] (Seoul: Korea National Open University, 1987), 221.

of the patriarch. Divorce is a taboo and a divorced person is regarded almost as a criminal in this situation.

In these days the Korean family system, under the influence of Westernization, is changing from the old way of focusing on family to the new way of promoting individualism.<sup>6</sup> Members of the young generation of today prefer individual life and happiness more than individual sacrifice and sparing pain for the family. They do not want to waste time by living an unhappy life.<sup>7</sup> I think that Western culture negatively influenced the Korean family system. A feeling of common bonds has vanished from Korean families because of what is perceived as "selfishness," which in itself is seen as an outcome of Western influence.

Second, some people view divorce in terms of individual welfare. E. G. Menaghan and M. A. Lieberman indicate negative results for divorce; people have high

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<sup>6</sup> Society for Research of the Korean Family, Divorce and Family Issues [in Korean] (Seoul: Hawoo, 1993), 58-59.

<sup>7</sup> Kang, Eun Hee, Divorce: New Opportunity [in Korean] (Seoul: Achim, 1995), 18.

depression and more financial difficulty, and hardships of life. S. J. Price and P. C. McKenry say that most people have pain and stress from divorce while some people do have positive experiences.<sup>8</sup>

Divorce also can become a new chance for happiness for some people; it can be an opportunity for self-realization and self-respect. Namely, divorce is viewed not as a waiver but an opportunity for new hope toward a better life. Of course, divorce is one of the most painful experiences in life. While people might see the positive side of divorce and therefore divorce, they might not easily break up their marriage if they see the downside of divorce. I think that people should know these two sides before they think about divorce.

Third, people see divorce as a structural function and a social interchange. People always select the largest profit in an interaction with others. If all were to think that divorce will give a larger compensation than the current married life,

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<sup>8</sup> David H. Demo and Lawrence H. Ganong, "Divorce," in Families and Change: Coping With Stressful Events, ed. Patrick C. McKenry and Sharon J. Price, (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994), 201-06.

which is not satisfactory, young people would consider ending their married life.<sup>9</sup>

Divorce is not a short experience; it has permanence. Divorce is a choice, as people have a choice of whether to marry or not. If people could avoid divorce, it would be the best choice, but if an unhappy married life leads to heartache, divorce could be one solution for the unhappy life.

Divorce is a necessary evil in some people's lives. Divorce is like a window to show us many things: an unsolved problem in married life, excessive expression of discord, a contradiction of the structure and system of marriage. Therefore, we should open our minds to divorced people and remove the strong taboo in our consciousness, which is deeply rooted on the traditional custom. People should realize that divorce is not for only some special people anymore. Especially for the young generation, divorce is another choice for their abundant life.

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<sup>9</sup> Society for Research of the Korean Family, 175 -76.

### Actual Analysis of Divorce

Divorce is a result of the negative effect of social progress; it is not something that should be recommended to people. Divorce is widely received in today's families and society as a choice in the worst case.

Why does the rate of divorce continually increase? This is extremely difficult to answer because the reasons for divorce vary according to different individuals. Also people have different backgrounds, characters, and individual peculiarities. However, we can generally find several common reasons for divorce.

The increase in divorce comes from an elevation of the status of women, the transformation of consciousness, the weakening of social control, unreasonable expectations for marriage and religion.

Elevation of the status of women. The contemporary industrial society needs women's labor, which is increased by social demand. Thus women can more easily get a job and this gives them economic independence from men. In this

situation women can support their children's education with less financial difficulty. Why is the rate of divorce increasing rapidly for young adults? Because the younger generation is growing up with less financial hardships, and men and women are entitled to the same rights. Hence, a trait of the younger generation is individualism and self-interest.<sup>10</sup>

Transformation of consciousness and weakening of social control. In ancient Korean society, family relationships had the order of priority in the function of social control. Confucian ethics is a control tool for the prevention of divorce. The present age has variations in consciousness for divorce and its function of social control. Improvement of the educational level of women brings the movement of women's rights into the society. Industrial society, which makes social and geographical migration possible, prevents the strong social critique for divorce. The Korean government has strengthened new family laws to

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<sup>10</sup> Chang, Jung Soon, Why You should not Divorce? [in Korean] (Seoul: Hyunmin System, 1994), 35.

support women's rights in divorce. These reasons make it easier for women to divorce from an unhappy marriage.

Unreasonable expectations for marriage and religions.

Unrealistic expectations for a spouse create a high percentage of divorces.<sup>11</sup> Most couples want to accomplish their expectations which are sexual, emotional, and ideal desires within their marriage. In actuality, no one can meet all of the expectations, even if a person is rich and has a high level of education. If a couple wants a happy marriage, couples should readjust their expectations from unrealistic to realistic.

Moreover, the percentage of divorce varies according to people's status with regard to religion. The current divorce rate reflects a higher percentage of nonreligious people than religious people. This phenomenon is due to the teachings of most Korean churches and their pastors that divorce is a sin, which leads many Christians to dislike

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<sup>11</sup> Society for Research of the Korean Family, 23.



divorce. Religious life encourages couples to work towards a more peaceful married life.

### Theological Understanding of Divorce

#### Biblical Viewpoint of Divorce

The person in divorce experiences great pain in the process of divorce. If he/she were a religious person, he/she would have more difficulty because of religious education. By basing their opinions on the Bible, most churches and pastors prohibit divorce.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." (Matt 19:5-6)

To Christians this passage seems to disapprove of divorce.

Therefore, when a religious person is faced with divorce, he/she generally has more struggle than a non-religious person. If he/she is a pious person, the pain is greater.

When a couple experiences the crisis of divorce, the church and its pastor should help the couple to overcome the

critical situation. However, if a couple has already broken up, should a church or pastor agree with their dissolved relationship? Also, how can a church and its pastor help divorced couples solve their religious conflict and guilty feelings? If a church and the pastor cannot provide an answer, divorced couples in the church will not have healing from wounded hearts. I believe that the church and its pastor should reevaluate their own biblical viewpoint for divorced people and approach them with more supportive biblical understanding, because divorced people are also children of God.

Actually, the Bible only has a few statements on divorce. The word "divorce" as a noun is found only once in Deuteronomy; the phrase "be divorced" is found three times; and the words "a bill of divorcement" are found five times. Although divorce is a social problem today, the Bible only slightly deals with divorce. Further, the Bible does not seem to prohibit divorce. When the Bible speaks of divorce, the Bible insists on the importance of the happiness of

married couples that faithfully keep the contract of marriage.

### Understanding of Divorce in the Old Testament

For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless. (Mal. 2:16)

A writer of Malachi brings up the problem of sincerity of the husband. Sometimes husbands in those days evicted their wives from their house through divorce because of an aversion to their wives. In such cases, some men abused their legal rights of divorce.

Why does the Old Testament not deal with divorce as much, except in the books of Malachi and Deuteronomy?

There are three reasons. First, Hebrews thought that the family was extremely important, and so they made an effort to prevent the breakdown of the family. Second, due to the education of Judaism, divorce was seen as immoral or moral idleness that demanded some sort of discipline or

contemptuousness from the community. Third, during the time of the Old Testament, the society did not have abundant wealth. In a time of material abundance, divorce has become a common societal problem.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 clearly deals with the theme of divorce in the Old Testament.

Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house and goes off to become another man's wife. Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies); her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the LORD, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession.

These verses insist on three things. First, it is the purpose of rules and regulation. This law does not encourage divorce or a bill of divorcement. It just prohibits remarriage with a former spouse because it is

viewed as being detestable to God. A purpose of this law is to protect women from their husbands.<sup>12</sup> Second, divorce should officially maintain impartiality. Namely, the text clearly defines a reason of divorce as something objectionable about the woman. It is difficult to inquire into the adultery of a wife because the penalty for adultery meant death instead of divorce (Deut. 22: 20-27; Lev. 20:10).

Shammai was a conservative Pharisee who interpreted the Bible literally. He understood that the something objectionable about the wife is a sexual offense. However, it is not adultery or group sex.

In opposition, Rabbi Hillel insists that if the wife did not give her husband "gratification"(verse 1), the husband would hate his wife (verse 3). Rabbi Hillel considers the importance of the whole meaning in the spirit of the law more than the literal interpretation. So, he includes an insignificant mistake as a possible reason for

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<sup>12</sup> John R. W. Stott, Marriage and Divorce (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985); Marriage and Divorce, trans. Kim, Won Joo (Seoul: Durano, 1991), 16.

something objectionable about the wife. For example, the woman is not a good cook for her husband or she likes to debate with her husband. Also, the husband dislikes his wife because of other beautiful girls. Actually, when the wife bothers the husband, it becomes a legal reason for divorce.<sup>13</sup>

Third, if divorce is permitted, remarriage should be allowed. A premise of the above biblical phase is that a woman can remarry even if she is a sinner, and after her husband sends his wife from the house with a bill of divorce.<sup>14</sup> The main purpose of Deuteronomy 24: 1-5 is in verse 4. The law makes divorce a more important issue than universal thinking of the then Hebrew people. At that time, men were not restrained to divorce their wives, but the law helped men to reconsider their marriage.

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<sup>13</sup> American Academy for Jewish Research, Louis Ginzberg: Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, English Section (New York: American Academy of Jewish Research, 1945), 275-91.

<sup>14</sup> Stott, trans. Kim, Won Joo, 18.

### Understanding of Divorce in the New Testament

Two sections in the New Testament deal with divorce. The first lesson is in the Sermon on the Mount. In these verses, Jesus states, "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery'" (Matt. 5: 31-32).

The second lesson is in the beginning of an answer to a question from the Pharisees. Matthew insists that the Pharisees test Jesus by asking a question. They asked, "Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?'" (Matt. 19:3). Mark also shows it in Mark 10:2. "Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?'" The emphasis of the question is on the reason and grounds for rationalization of divorce.

Jesus differs with the Pharisees who have an ambiguous attitude toward the problem of divorce. Jesus vetoes the

teaching of the Pharisees that men can easily divorce by giving a bill of divorcement to women. Instead, Jesus uses the Pharisees' question as a chance to teach about divorce.

First, Jesus proclaims that the law of divorce according to Moses is a temporary approval for the sin of human beings. Jesus quotes the Law of Moses as an approval for sin, but Jesus believes divorce to be a negative result of human sin. The Law of Moses does not seem to be God's approval; it is just acceptance of divine nature.

Second, Jesus says remarriage after divorce is adultery. If a man remarries his former wife, it is adultery (Matt. 19:9, Mark 10:11, Luke 16:18); also it means that if a divorced woman remarried her former husband, the woman would commit adultery (Matt. 5:22). A woman's remarriage with another man after divorce is also adultery (Mark 10:12). Moreover, if a man marries with a divorced woman, it is adultery (Luke 16:18). Any divorce and



remarriage was illegal, and adultery did not meet with God's approval.<sup>15</sup>

Third, in Matthew, Jesus approves divorce and remarriage if the divorce were based on an immorality. Only illegal sexual relations such as adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality (according to Hillel and Shammai) become reasons to end a marriage. Why does Matthew's Jesus make sexual immorality a reason for divorce? Jesus makes immorality a reason for divorce because marriage is "one body" and sexual immorality breaks the concept of "one body." Jesus thus approves of divorce as the means of healing the body.

Jesus does not agree with the ambiguous attitude of the Pharisees and the notion of Moses, "something objectionable about her," because of an uncertainty. Jesus agrees with a sex crime as a reason for the break of conjugal affection. A sex crime is related to capital punishment in the Old Testament era. However, the death penalty is

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<sup>15</sup> Stott, trans. Kim, Won Joo, 21-22.

abolished as a punishment for adultery later on. Romans did not give Jewish people permission for the death penalty. Hence, when the Virgin Mary is accused of unchastity, Joseph thinks about divorce instead of death (Matt. 1:19). Therefore, later in his own life, through the example of his parents, Jesus abolishes the death penalty for a sex crime (John 8:3-11) and insists that a moral offence is the solitary reason for breaking conjugal love.<sup>16</sup>

I think that we should discourage divorce and make an effort to diminish it. I would like to talk of the reasons for preaching about divorce from biblical teaching, and the psychological problems of the contracting person in divorce. First, Biblical teaching does not accept divorce firmly because, "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matt. 19:6). Sometimes, some people try to deal with the problem of divorce using Matthew 19:9. However, this verse does

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<sup>16</sup> Stott, trans. Kim, Won Joo, 27.

not clearly explain the reasons for divorce. Thus, I want to refer to Matthew 19:3-9 to treat the problem of divorce.

In Matthew 19:3-9, Jesus brings in the order of creation by God from Genesis chapters 1 and 2 to explain divorce. Jesus clarifies an opposite viewpoint about divorce (man and woman is one flesh, no longer two, Matt. 19:6), by quoting Genesis 2:24. He insists that divorce does not exist in the plan of creation. He views, "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matt. 19:6) as the basic principle of marriage.

Because they are not satisfied with Jesus' answer they said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:7-8). Jesus clarifies that a bill of divorcement is a human expediency because of the wickedness of the humans; it is not an essential intention of God.

Jay E. Adams explains it as follows: "In our day cigarette smoking is not forbidden but it is heavily regulated (cigarettes can't be smoked in certain part of an airplane, etc.). In this one respect, the practice of smoking resembles the way divorce was viewed and regulated."<sup>17</sup> He describes divorce clearly with the example of cigarette smoking. That is to say, divorce is a septic product; it cannot be a way of escape in all cases. This is the same or similar definition of divorce that Jesus has in the New Testament. Similar to Jay Adam's belief of divorce being a septic product, Jesus believed divorce to be a result of human being's and society's sinfulness.

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<sup>17</sup> Jay E. Adams, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1980), 69.

## Chapter 3

### Young Adult Divorce in Korea

#### Divorce among Contemporary Young Adults in Korea

#### Features of Contemporary Young Adults

Douglas W. Johnson described three characteristics of young couples in his book, Ministry with Young Couples. These three characteristics are pragmatism, determination, and sophistication.<sup>1</sup> For example, divorce is a pragmatic decision, even though an underlying value of both partners may be maintaining a strong marriage. Determination forges his/her own life pattern. Young adults do not say that they are overwhelmed by the multiplicity of decisions or the struggles they encounter. The media, such as television, has shaped the sophistication of world affairs. These kinds of characteristics come with the advance of technology.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, 26-27.

While Korea has changed from an agricultural society to an industrial society over the last 30 years, Korean young adults have developed some of the same characteristics as those defined by Douglas W. Johnson. During the last 30 years the rate of divorce increased seven times. The advancement of technology causes a lot of changes in life and living styles in Korean society. The advancement also brings changes to our point of view about our life and society.

As a result of these changes, old and young generations have different life styles even within the same family. The older generation has grown up with an Eastern life-style, and the younger generation has grown up with a Western life-style. The older generation tends to think that divorce is a result of their sin, their own sin or their ancestor's sin. However, divorce is just a common thing to the younger generation in Korea; it is not a taboo to them anymore.

Due to the change in awareness about divorce, the divorce rate has been increasing rapidly, almost doubling every year in Korea. The increase clearly shows in population statistics from the Korean National Statistical Office.<sup>2</sup> Marriages in 2001 more 320,063, a decrease of about 14,000 from 2000; 870 couples marry every day. On the other hand, divorces in 2001 more 135,014 unit 370 couples divorcing every day. The number of divorces increased about 15,000 from 2000. The rate of divorce in 2001 increased almost 3 times compared to 1992. (See chart below)

Tabulation of Statistics I <sup>3</sup>

Year Contents	1992	1994	1999	2000	2001
Number of Marriages	419.872	393.121	362.673	334.030	320.063
Number of Divorces	53.539	65.015	118.014	119.982	135.014

<sup>2</sup> Korean National Statistical Office, Jan 2002; accessed 2 June 2002; available from [http://www.nso.go.kr/cgi-bin/sws\\_777pop.cgi?A\\_REPORT\\_ID=MA&A\\_CONTENTS=0211&A\\_LANG=1](http://www.nso.go.kr/cgi-bin/sws_777pop.cgi?A_REPORT_ID=MA&A_CONTENTS=0211&A_LANG=1)

<sup>3</sup> KNSO, 2002.

The younger generation thinks divorce is an acceptable part of their life-style that comes from high education, economic success, and the independent life styles of women. Women work more than men even though many young adult couples share their housework in the present time. Also, women's wages are just 64.3% of men, in spite of improvements in women's status in society.

#### Crisis of Young Adult Family

The most seriousness problem in the phenomenon of disorganization of the family is evident when the divorce rate goes up rapidly. According to the data from the Korean National Statistical Office in 1998, the population of the age group between 25 and 34 in Korea was 8,190,206. The registration of marriages for the age group between 25-35 was 320,063, and the registration for divorce was 135,014.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, according to the data of the KNSO in 1998, about 80% of the young adults finished or were attending college. An average income for them was 1,893, 873 won

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<sup>4</sup> Korean National Statistical Office, 1998; accessed 11 Aug, 2002; available from <http://www.nso.go.kr>.



(Korean Monetary unit) per month. If won is converted to dollars, it is around \$1,600.00 with the present exchange rate.<sup>5</sup> However, the climb in the rate of divorce in Korea was the highest in the world in 1998 at 33.7%. The climb in the rate of divorce in Korea came during a period of Korean financial distress. At that time, many people lost their jobs and could not find new jobs. The most serious problem was that the family breakdown was composed of young and old adult groups.

According to the data from the KNSO in 2001, the population of 20-30 year olds in Korea was 16,997,559.<sup>6</sup> The registration of marriages was 320,000 and the registration of divorces was 135,000. The ratio of marriages to divorces appeared to be three to one, which is similar to that of Europe.

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<sup>5</sup> Korean National Statistical Office, 1998; accessed 12 July, 2002; available from <http://kosis.nso.go.kr>.

<sup>6</sup> Korean Dailynews, 13 Dec. 2002; accessed 13 Dec 2002; available from <http://kr.dailynews.yahoo.com/headlines/pl/20021213/dongacom/do2002121328492.html>

According to Alvin Toffler in 1970, the issue of divorce was seen as having a negative affect in the future.

He states in his book Future Shock,

The family has been called the "giant shock absorber" of society---the place to which the bruised and battered individual returns after doing battle with the world, the one stable point in an increasingly flux-filled environment. As the super-industrial revolution unfolds, this "shock absorber" will come in for some shocks of its own.<sup>7</sup>.....  
In tomorrow's world, being single will be no crime. Nor will couples be forced to remain imprisoned, as so many still are today, in marriages that have turned rancid. Divorce will be easy to arrange, so long as responsible provision is made for children. In fact, the very introduction of professional parenthood could touch off a great liberating wave of divorces by making it easier for adults to discharge their parental responsibilities without necessarily remaining in the cage of a hateful marriage. With this powerful external pressure removed, those who stay together would be those who wish to stay together, those for whom marriage is actively fulfilling---those, in short, who are in love.<sup>8</sup>

Such predictions for the future have come true today.

Goode insists that divorce is extrication from unavoidable

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<sup>7</sup> Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970), 211.

<sup>8</sup> Toffler, 227.

tension.<sup>9</sup> Our society of today thinks that divorce is an individual problem, as Goode indicates, so the contracting person in divorce should solve it by him/herself. Moreover, divorce is difficult on the family because society views it as maladjustment of the married life and moral failure, and the family must readjust itself to the new environment.

#### Issue of Divorce for Young Adult Family

As already indicated, the ratio of divorce in Korea has been increasing continually since going over 1% in 1978. It finally reached 32.4% in 2001.

According to statistics of the 1990s, disparity in character was the first reason for divorce (30.8%), second was cheating on his/her spouse (19.6 %), and third was financial problems (14%). However, in 1970 financial problems was the first reason for divorce (27.1%), second was cheating on his/her spouse (26%), and third was disparity in character (26%). Financial problems as a factor in divorce decreased compared to the 1970s, but disparity in character

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<sup>9</sup> Goode, 191.

saw an increase.<sup>10</sup> One reason that financial problems may have decreased as a factor is because women were freer from financial issues in married life in 1990 than in the 1970s.

The tremendous increase in divorce marks a new trend. One cause of the new trend is an increase in divorce due to financial problems. In addition, men suing for divorce were 56.2 % of the divorce suits in 1991. However, with women's financial independence in 2000, women suing for a divorce were 62.8%.<sup>11</sup> This means that women's rights have increased since the 1970s with an industrial growth in society and church and better economic opportunities for women.

Other reasons for divorce have been decreasing every year, but divorce due to financial problems has been increasing rapidly every year from 1990 to today.

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<sup>10</sup> Sunwoo INC, June. 2001; accessed 2 June 2002; available from <http://www.Sunoo.com>

<sup>11</sup> IhonClinic, March. 2001 accessed 17 July 2002; available from <http://www.ihondinic.co.kr>

## Component Ratio of Reason for Divorce

Year Contents	1990	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	45,694	91,159	116,727	118,014	119,982	135,014
Discord in Couple	37,261	72,407	90,594	90,765	89,372	99,954
Discord in the Family	1,575	2,682	3,557	3,835	-	
Health	673	908	1,112	1,031	1,054	975
Financial Problem	927	3,866	7,714	8,336	12,793	15,617
Etc	5,258	10,804	13,634	13,873	15,571	17,121

The seven-fold increase in divorce comes from the change in women's societal status as well as an economic recession. If men and women divorce because of financial problems, men and women do not want to bring up their children. Therefore, divorce for financial problems has tragic results for the entire family.

Today, men and women of the younger generations are growing up in a social environment that makes them more equal.

Their parents, age range 45-55, are making divorce much easier for them. Most of these parents have just one or two children, so the parents tend to be overprotective of their children in the growth process. For example, if a young woman has a trifle quarrel with her spouse, her father or mother might bring their daughter to their house. This kind of action makes it difficult for the younger couple to reconcile with each other. This situation also is true for young men. The reason for this kind of behavior comes from the selfishness of the parents' and the daughter's or son's own life or family.

### Divorce among Young Adults in Korea

#### Features of the Christian Young Adult

How many people in the Korean population go to church?

According to the data from the Korean National Statistical Office in 1995, 8,760,336 people were Christian out of a Korean population of 44,553,710 people about 19.6%. Out of the 8,760,336 Christians, how many young adults go to church?

According to the KNSO, 1,565,281 people are young

adult Christians who attend church, which is 18.7% of the entire Korean young adult population.

How can the church bring young adult newcomers to the future of church? Douglas Johnson points out that young couples can conquer every difficulty in their lives. He insists, "Their optimism is a product of youth and affluence."<sup>12</sup> As time passes and experiences accumulate, this attitude changes.

Young couples bring their life-styles to church, and pastors should realize the need of young adults for future ministry. Douglas Johnson says, "Their attitudes toward church tend to be guided by (1) their perceptions of the ability and integrity of the pastor and (2) their feeling of acceptance by a peer group within the church."<sup>13</sup> For example, Sam-Il Church in Seoul, Korea, shows this theory. The membership of Sam-Il Church is around 5,000; there are over 3,500 college students and young adults who are 25-35 years old. Jeon, Byung Wook is the senior pastor of Sam-Il

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<sup>12</sup> Johnson, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, 40.

Church and one of the people who has significant influence on young adults in Korea because of his preaching style, straightforward, simple, and evangelistic. His target population is young adults who are 20-30 years old. His preaching influences young people because it gives them directions on how to live in this society as Christian. Further, young people come to the Sam-Il Church because there are lots of people in their age group. Thus, they can have the same age culture within the church.

#### Crisis of Christian Young Adult Family

In church and society, old and young generations have different views on life. Douglas Johnson insists that because of social-cultural changes between generations, younger couples are willing to work hard to achieve logical goals in a way that older couples do not.<sup>14</sup> As stated, young adults have different viewpoints than older adults on some issues and problems. It makes for some conflict with older adults in the church and society. Old people have

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<sup>14</sup> Johnson, 45.



difficulty understanding young people and young people have difficulty understanding old people. More so, young and old have different views of divorce. Old think of divorce as a sin, while the young view it as one type of life-style. It happens to the church because of different views of divorce.

The differences in views about divorce between the young and old make it difficulty in the churches today. Most Korean churches consider divorce a sin citing prohibitive laws of the Bible, and they see divorced people with a prejudice. Korean churches and pastors today do not deal well with the problems of divorce. Also, it is related to church growth. If the church and pastor deal with this issue, it will bring on the disintegration of the church in most cases because of the differences in views about divorce between the young and old. Hence, most Korean churches and their pastors evade it as an issue in the church. This is very evident in Korean churches and among pastors today.

## Chapter 4

### The Church as a Shelter for Divorced Young Adults

#### Divorced Young Adults are a Vital Part of Korean Church's Future

Wallace M. Alston, Jr. states that the church exists as a result of an act of God, so that the church is the people of God, the community of believers in his book, The Church.<sup>1</sup> What is the ministry of the church? I think that the ministry of the church is an extension of the ministry of Christ. Mark shows it in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Alstone states,

To some people, the church is a source of comfort and help in a troubled world; to others, the church is an agent of social change, which should challenge people to confront injustice in society. For some, the ministry of the church should concern

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace M. Alston, Jr., The Church (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 14.

itself primarily with the individual's relationship to Jesus Christ, providing a warm and supportive context for the birth and maturation of personal faith. For others, the ministry of the church is primarily a ministry of outreach to people with spiritual or physical needs outside of the believing fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

I agree with him. The church should come to people who are Christians or non-Christian and these who have sufferings or not. I believe that the ministry of the church should become a shelter to everyone.

Nowadays, many people who have experienced divorce or have struggled with the crisis of divorce have strong feelings of social and spiritual failure. As a result, their state of spirituality is exhausted. If they cannot solve such spiritual and social problems it will make it difficult for divorced young adults in their new environment. How can churches become a shelter for divorced young adults? Actually, the best counseling for divorced people in spiritual and social crisis has been "just wait." They

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<sup>2</sup> Alston, 124.

will recover spiritual health and calmness but it will take a long time.

It is crucial for the pastor and entire church community to be involved with providing care of their young adults when the marriage is crumbling. If the church does not have an open mind about divorce they will have unpleasant and negative experiences in their church. Some people who have no spiritual base have a difficult time recovering from divorce. Because they have conflict between their biblical knowledge and the truth of religious life, it seems discordant. In this case, divorced young adults have limitations to recovering from their pains of divorce.

Sometimes, some people believe that they are victims of divorce. They are angry toward God because "God did it to them." They have fear and rage in the process of divorce because they think that God has abandoned them. Yet, with prayer support, the wounded hearts should heal with spiritual growth through the trials of life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thompson, 162-63.

During the times of healing, the church needs to embrace the divorced young adults. We should not judge the brother (Rom. 14:10,13). We ought to participate in the pain of parting (Rom. 12:15). Also, we should help them in the viewpoint of 1 Corinthians 7:17: "However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches."

The rate of divorce rapidly grows every year. Divorce is not something that happens to others in this situation. Everybody is subject to the possibility of divorce. Moreover, the problem of divorce becomes a pressing question nowadays. If Korean churches turn their face away from this problem, young people will leave their churches. Who will affirm the future of the church? The church should provide space to divorced young adults with help from church congregations. When the church becomes a social and spiritual place for support for divorced young adults, divorced young adults will become a vital part of the Korean church's future. If the church cannot provide anything to

the divorced young adults even though the world is rapidly having changed by technology then the church will eventually become extinct.

### The Church as a Social Shelter

Often times churches and pastors also see many divorced young adults not only in their church but also in the community at large. Those people outside the church may require different approaches. People inside the church share Christian identity with pastors and they come for pastoral counseling with certain expectations, whether the problem is social or spiritual. However, if they are non-believers, a pastor has the challenge of being a spiritual adviser because of the lack of faith on the seeker's part. At that point, a pastor should become a general advisor to people.

In counseling situations, pastors of churches should supply all the needs of divorced adults because the church should work as a shelter. However, small churches may not have enough energy to form support groups for divorced young

adults. Therefore, in this situation, churches and pastors have to have an interest in social services outside the churches. Sometimes, churches and pastors need to make or keep in close contact with social services for the divorced young adults in the church. I want to be clear; it is like a network system. Social services means a national, public organization, or all kinds of organizations for divorced young adults people. The local church networks with these organizations to help counsel divorced young adults. For example, divorced young adult women experience more difficulties than men in Korean society even though women's status has improved. It is true, but I believe that both men and women become the church's target people in this ministry. Even though Kim, Soon Ok suggests that divorced young women need support from society more than men, I suggest that the ministry should be provided to both men and women in the following areas.

1. Financial Support; the government should provide financial support systems for organizations.

For example,

- 1) To support educational expenses.
- 2) To support medical expenses.
- 3) To support living expenses for single mothers and fathers who have financial difficulty.
- 4) To support for occupational education and the commencement of work.

2. The care and feeding of children and educational programs.

A government or social organization, which receives assistance from the government, manages programs or public institutions for the education and feeding of children as follows.

- 1) To manage various nursery programs for the care and feeding of preschoolers.
- 2) To provide various programs for after-school or education facilities.
- 3) To manage educational programs and counseling with parents and children.



4) To manage counseling organizations for children who have specific issues or problems because of parents' divorce. It is possible to offer counseling with assistance of the government through phone counseling or person-to-person counseling, etc.

### 3. Psychological social support.

1) To manage education programs to promote a spirit of independence.

2) To manage counseling and healing programs for psychological adaptation and growth after divorce.

3) To act as an agent for the meeting of divorced people for emotional stability.

4) To support an opportunity of remarriage.<sup>4</sup>

Although the above contents are not put into full effect today, it shows us what our society needs to prepare for divorced people in the future.

In the present time, the quality of supporting systems of the Korean government and public organizations is quite

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<sup>4</sup> The above contents are summarized from Soon Ok Kim's study. Soon Ok Kim, Divorce and Family Problems [in Korean] (Seoul: Hawoo, 1993), 182-84.

poor compared to that of Western society. For example, if someone in Korea were to have financial difficulty as well as health problems, he/she would try to find help without going to the support systems of the government. This is the fastest way to get to their needs and necessities because supporting systems of the Korean government are slow and small, particularly in regard to finances. However, support systems of the American government are reasonable and real, so that if anyone in need were to apply to an agency of the American government, the needs probably would be met.

Even if the organizations existed, churches and pastors should utilize social organizations and programs to help divorced young adults in the church. This kind of effort should become the first step of the church to offer social shelter for divorced young adults. It is love and concern for the hardships and grief from divorce. I believe that the shelter is to show love and interest for others.

### The Church as a Spiritual Shelter

The church is a place of support, protection, and love for divorced young adults. However to our regret, some church members criticize divorced young adults and avoid them sometimes. It makes the divorced young adults feel more frustrated than the difficulty of divorce.

Churches and pastors should face up to the reality of divorce to help divorced young adults. Churches and pastors have to be clear about their viewpoint of divorce based on Genesis chapter 2. Churches and pastors cannot deal with issues of divorce without a viewpoint of divorce in terms of spiritual care.

Pastors should become active in educating church members about the variation of viewpoints of divorce in the church. The church must educate all age groups on marriage and issues of divorce through educational programs. Then the church can turn into a spiritual shelter. Becoming a spiritual shelter can be achieved by the efforts and love of all church members.

The Church should help to teach all age groups that marriage could be difficult. Men and women have to handle the obligations of married life, and every marriage has moments of tension and crisis. The church can identify with all age groups in most issues. Also, young people can learn about actual married life through indirect experiences.

The church needs to develop a new viewpoint about divorce. The church needs to make efforts to change people's attitudes from negative to positive toward divorced people. Actually, prejudice toward or disapproval of divorced people is deeply rooted in the minds of church members. Their prejudice comes from insufficient understanding about biblical data and theological deficiency. Prejudice is emotional. Therefore, the church must help its church members to understand divorced people with appropriate and supportive attitudes about divorce.<sup>5</sup> I think that the church and pastors can educate entire church members through preaching and Bible study. Many Korean

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<sup>5</sup> Myrna Kysar and Robert Kysar, The Asundered: Biblical Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), 99.

Christians believe and follow the ways of preaching and Bible study as the Word of God. It is an effective way to educate the entire church and to change the prejudices on divorce.

The church must be prepared to discuss such reluctance with great love and concern for divorced people. It is very important who the person is to lead the discussion in this matter. I think that pastors or elders who are professional counselors or psychiatrists should lead in the discussions.

First, a key person opens a small group meeting for divorced people or meets them person-to-person. At that time, a key person hears stories and needs. This action shows that the church and pastor have love and interest in their members. I think that the church and divorced people can open their minds to each other.

Second, a pastor cannot take care of the entire church membership. For this, the church can create a counseling center in the church, and the church can let an assistant pastor or some elders who are trained professional counselors

or psychiatrists work in this counseling center as staff.

I think that this counseling center can work not only for divorced people but also for other church member who have problems. In this case, the counseling center can follow up on the church members continually, and staff of the counseling center can tell the kinds of needs or necessities of divorced people to the church and senior pastor.

However, the church and counselors have to protect the privacy of people who come to the counseling center for advice.

The church must be concerned about the needs and necessities of divorced people. For example, many divorced people face financial difficulties, problems with their children or relationships with others in the church.

However, some churches make the mistake of stereotyping divorced people and try to help the divorced according to the church's traditional processes of decision and analysis.

Hence, some churches and pastors are prone to misunderstand the needs of divorced people. It comes from a sketchy

understanding of the situation. When the church has a counseling center or counseling staff for divorced people, divorced people can feel the love and concern of the church.

The church should accept the divorced and help them to grow in God's love. Grace and love overwhelms judgment. For this the church and pastor should open their minds to having discussions with divorced people. And, a pastor, and the entire church community, should provide for the needs of divorced people. I think that the divorced need their space in the church as members. The church and pastor have to give space according to the needs and desires, because the one body of Christ also includes the divorced people of the congregation. For example, a pastor and the church bring them into the center of the church not for attention but to affirm them as vital members. They too can be a chairperson or main member of the church. It is one of signs and efforts to accept divorced people as part of the family in Jesus Christ.

Let us remember that the story of Jesus and an adulteress (John 8: 1-11) shows us a consistent image of Jesus in the Gospels. The attitude of Jesus is toleration; it is not blaming the adulteress. Jesus does not show us an attitude of arrogance but his righteousness and his grace for others in his message. An adulteress obtained forgiveness in love and acceptance.<sup>6</sup>

The Korean church and its pastor should accept unsuccessful marriages rather than exclude the divorced people from the church. Such a conclusion can have minimum damage as a solution. A pastor must show the divorced that they are still people of God, by the grace of God. Then the divorced can find the possibilities of new life from a vestige of divorce.

I want to develop plans to develop a spiritual shelter for divorced young adults in the church. First, a pastor and church has to have counseling, person to person, quietly and regularly. Second, everybody in the church needs to

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<sup>6</sup> Kysar and Kysar, 101.



make an effort to offer new jobs opportunities for divorced young adults especially for those who may have lost their jobs or livelihood. The church can help them with their minimum living expenses until they are financially independent. Third, the church can accept divorced people as members of the Christian community without any prejudice. Finally, the church gives them consideration for various problems after divorce. Many people do not think about the result of divorce because people are overshadowed by the hardships and difficulties in the process of divorce. The church and pastor should let people know the existence of various problems that occur after divorce by educating the church members through counseling sessions and seminars, which are dealt with in Chapter 5. Also, the church and pastor should help people to rethink their situation with enough time. However, if a person still decides to divorce the spouse even though the church and pastor have helped him/her to think about it, the church should then help the person to stand throughout the sufferings of divorce.

When the church becomes the early church community,  
everybody can be one as children of God. We can then share  
everything as a family in the church. It is a real shelter  
to everybody.

## Chapter 5

### Case Studies: Effective Models of Church Ministry for Divorced Young Adults

What is an effective model of ministry for divorced young adults? I think that the church needs to help and support divorced young adults throughout their difficulties and sufferings, through the grief of divorce, so that the divorced may be able to become vital members of the congregation. The church should invest in the ministry for divorced young adults because an investment for divorced young adults is one of the signs of love and concern of the church. Not only that, attending to the divorced young adults shows that the divorced are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. For example, the church can make a budget of programs for divorced people such as Bible study and special programs. Otherwise, the church may hire a coordinator of programs who can make some plans for divorced people within a

budget. I think that a pastor and church elders cannot do everything in ministry.

I believe that the church also should make an effort to help Christian families make a happy family life with healthy and good family relationships. The church should support the families to solve the conflicts within the family relationships. When the families of church members recover their health, the church can become a healthy and happy church. If a family has some conflict in family relationships, it will affect the church. The church and the Christian family have a close relationship as one organism; it is like a double-sided coin.

Why should the church show interest and love toward divorced young adults? Gods' love that exists eternally and equally for everybody even though they are sinners. The church should present a biblical method to people who have conflict in their family. A psychological session or specific program is just a temporarily expedient; it is not enough for people who are suffering. The church should

help them to find their value or identity as people of God even though they are divorced.

I think that the church has to have two programs for divorced young adults in the church. First, the church should offer Bible study classes for divorced young adults and any others who have interest in this kind of class. The church offers a classroom for it. People meet once a week in the evening during the course of seven weeks. Each class takes about two hours. During these seven weeks, divorced people would realize and find an identity as Christians.

A second program for divorced young adults is a divorce recovery school. This is a retreat program for two days in a retreat center or recreation facility after the seven-week Bible study. This program helps the divorced people to meet other divorced people who have the experience of the Hand of God touching their hearts. Also, in this program divorced people have new energy to work in the church with the entire church membership. They will realize that they are not alone in their time of pain because there are

many others who have had similar experiences in their life. This program will strengthen the divorced. It is important that the church keep the balance between these two for an ideal model of church.

Since the middle of 1990s, Korean churches have been interested in family ministry because of the importance of family. Interest by Korean churches to the problem of divorce began to grow from 1996 when divorce became a social issue. Some Korean churches also developed programs for divorced people.

I have already introduced a two-part model of a program for divorced young adults. One is Bible study for the couples that address the crisis of divorce and divorced people. Another one is a retreat program, i.e., a "Single Dong-San,"<sup>1</sup> for three days for divorced young adults. These two programs combine to create a balance between knowledge in the Bible study and spiritual enlightenment in the retreat. My concern is that this is a little difficult for a small

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<sup>1</sup> Dong-San means hill.

church because of supply and demand. I would like to suggest that several churches create these programs together. I think these will be ideal models for small churches, and I include the models here.

#### Case 1

- Title: Bible Study for couples about to be married and/or those about to be divorced.

- Purpose: The Word of God should help heal the problem of conflict among couples; this principle becomes a basis for the Bible class.

- Date: Every Tuesday, 7:00 – 8:30 PM. This Bible study is a seven-week course.

- Place: The Bible study room in the Church building.

- Lecturer: Senior pastor or a pastor in charge of the class.

- Curriculum: The purpose of marriage, the true figure of wife and husband, communications of the couple, principle of finance, sexual relationship of the couple, education of children, etc.

A curriculum for this Bible study is designed for a short period. It is more powerful and comfortable for divorced young adults.



## Lesson Plan

### Chapter One: The Purpose of Marriage

"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner" (Gen. 2:18).

1) Genesis 2:18-25

2) Matthew 5:31-32 & 19:1-9.

### Chapter Two: The True Figure of Wife and Husband

"Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22).

1) Ephesians 5:22-23: Does this passage speak of the hierarchical difference between wife and husband.

2) Individual habits that bother your husband or wife.

3) Method of change and reminders for your husband or wife (without empty prattle).

4) Various ways for helping husbands or wives to be supportive.

5) Methods for building a strong married life.

6) Skills for building a close relationship.

### Chapter Three: Communication of the Couple

"A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit" (Prov. 15:4).

1) Proverbs 15:4

2) Deuteronomy 24:5

3) 2 Corinthians 10:12

I will give two types of questions to people. Small groups of 3-4 people will be formed and they will respond to the questions and share with the group (40 minutes). After that, one person will report the group's answers to everyone.

- Effective communication (To written material)

1) The factors of miscommunication.

2) Skills for communication.

3) Several steps for communicating.

4) Factors to prevent communication problems from the past.

5) Disputes and problems which are unsolved.

6) How does your wife or husband introduce you to others?

7) When do you talk to your spouse in a day?

8) How many hours do you talk to your spouse?

9) Records for forgiving others.

10) Happy things to share with your spouse.

- To Calm Anger (write material)

1) Reasons for your anger.

2) Forbidden things in anger.

3) The right things about anger.

4) Features of life.

#### Chapter Four: The Principles of Finance

"Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow" (Gal. 6:7).

1) 2 Corinthians 9:6

2) Galatians 6: 7-8

3) Luke 14:13-14

4) Proverbs 11:24-25

5) Management of material life.

## 6) Principles of the Bible.

### Chapter Five: Sexual Relationship of Couple

"But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1Cor. 7:9).

- 1) 1 Corinthians 7:9
- 2) Deuteronomy 22:22
- 3) Malachi 2:15
- 4) Sex
- 5) Marriage and sex
- 6) Primary application to the sexual life
- 7) Sexual purpose in marriage
- 8) Family plan
- 9) Sexual relationships after marriage.

### Chapter Six: Children Education

"Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward" (Psa. 127:3).

- 1) Psalms 127:3
- 2) 1 Corinthians 7:14

- 3) Feature of parenting.
- 4) Things of emphasis as parents.
- 5) The features of children of God.
- 6) Relationship between parents and children.
- 7) Training methods for children.
- 8) Principles education of Children.

Chapter Seven: Devotion.

“For we are God’s servants, working together;  
you are God’s field, God’s building” (1Cor. 3:9).

- 1) Romans 11:26
- 2) 1 Corinthians 3:9
- 3) Way of devotion to Jesus Christ
- 4) Period of devotion.
- 5) Way of devotion.

## Case 2

This program takes place outside of church during three days.

- Title: Single Dong-San

- Purpose: To help people heal and recover from wounded hearts, and then to help people live a true life in Jesus Christ.

- Time and Date: 6:00 pm – 9:00 Am, Friday to Sunday (after finishing the seven-week Bible study course). Saturday is good for this program. If Single Dong-San opens on Friday, it could be extended to Sunday Worship service. Then, the entire church membership and pastor can congratulate them so that the people in the program can feel a part of the church. I also want to open this program to the community. So, if anyone who would like to send an application for this program, even though they have not completed the Bible study class, he/she can participate in this retreat.

- Place: In a retreat center or recreation facilities.

- Lecturers: Specialists (for example, a family counselor, a lawyer, a doctor, a psychiatrist, and a pastor).

I suggest that a pastor have some preaching time during the retreat program. Also the pastor should make his/her message as part of a series of messages between the worship service in the retreat and the Sunday worship service affirming the participants' new life as Children of God. This is important to the program.

I attached the table of single dong-san at the end of this chapter.

## **Lesson Plan**

### **First Day**

#### **1. Welcome**

The sponsors welcome participants warmly. Some people may be uncomfortable about this program because they may be participating through someone's advice. Hence, it is quite important to make everyone feel welcome in this program.

#### **2. Worship**

A pastor leads this worship service, but it should be no more than 30 minutes - in consideration of the non-believer participants.

#### **3. Meal**

The sponsor should provide an abundant table to help participants feel special. In Korean custom, a meal is an important tool as an icebreaker for building a relationship between strangers. Also, the sponsor should make a homey atmosphere for people to talk freely with each other.



#### 4. Seminar

Seminar is divided into five sections in this program. If we were to present the entire seminar as one lecture, people would be tired and would close their minds. Also, the seminar could not be done in an hour.

##### Topic of seminar

##### 1. Why this happened to me.

- Self-discovery

##### 2. Overcoming pain and woundedness.

- Management of feelings of sorrow, anger, depression, fear, and loneliness
- Inner healing

##### 3. Explanation of lawful divorce,

- Talk by a Lawyer.

##### 4. Coping with actual relationship.

- Challenge for a new life.
- Preparing an independent spirit.

##### 5. Life with God.

- God's dream and plan for singles.

#### 4. Time for Sharing

First, I will assign 3-4 people per table in this program. Some guests who have experiences of divorce will report their experiences, how they dealt with it, and how they have overcome their difficulties. After that, participants will be given a few questions to open the floor to share their own stories. It will take to one and one half hour. After sharing, a pastor leads prayer time, and also participants to pray for each other.

#### 5. Praise and Seminar

Sing together and a specialist gives a Seminar.

#### 6. Closing the Evening

When participants go to bed, they will receive some letters from family members, their church members, or sponsors with some gifts. Sponsors will prepare these. The letters will help the participants to feel that they are being loved by many people.

## Second Day

### 7. Worship and a Walk

A pastor preaches about living a new life. The participants have the time for a walk and meditation.

### 8. Meal

The sponsors prepare an abundant meal table and provide an uplifting environment.

### 9. Last Seminar

A specialist leads a seminar. This will be the concluding seminar in series of five.

### 10. The Worship of Sending out to the World

A pastor gives the message about living a new life and life as children of God. The worship will remind the participants of their confirmation in God's Words.

### 11. Celebration in the Church

In Sunday worship service, the church and the entire membership welcome and celebrate the participants warmly. The participants will receive the love of people as part of the family in Jesus Christ.

Offering both programs together gives greater values than offering them as separate and independent programs.

If we just practice the Bible Study, it will make us become well informed without healing. On the other hand, if we prefer only Single Dong-San, it can be emotionally touching without order of life with the Word of God. Hence, the church should have balance between these two.

Nevertheless, if small churches worked with each other on these programs and conducted them well the human resources from each church, it would certainly be a powerful tool in the healing of divorced young adults. It also connects divorced young adults with each other more easily and opens their minds, because divorced young adults do not know others well. Divorced young people will feel comfortable and renewed more easily in this situation.

**Table of Single Dong-San**

<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
	6:20 AM: Rising	6:20 AM: Rising
	6:50: To Release Silence	6:30: Angel of morning
	7:30: Breakfast	7:15: Praise
	8:20: Praise	7:30: Seminar
	8:40: Seminar	8:00: Breakfast
	9:40: Praise	8:30: Group Prayer
	10:00: Seminar	9:00: The Worship of Sending out to the World
	11:00: Break	9:50: Go to the Church
	11:20: Presentation of Groups	11:00: Celebration in the Church
	12:00: Lunch	
	1:00: Praise	
	1:20: Seminar	
	2:20: Group Prayer	
	3:00: Break	
	3:20: To Write a Letter	
5:00: Meeting at the Church	4:00: Praise	
5:45: Arriving a Retreat Center	4:20: presentation of Letter	
6:00: Register/Snack/ Photographing	5:20: Dinner/Snack	
6:45: Dinner	6:20: "My Burden"	
7:45: Praise/Orientation	7:20: Break	
8:30: Make Table Name/ to Report Poster	7:40: Praise	
9:45: Praise	8:00: Seminar	
10:00: Silence	9:00: Special Event	
11:00: Closing the Evening	10:00: Closing the Evening	

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

Divorce, along with aging and juvenile delinquency, is one of the major problems facing Korean society and the church, today. These issues could worsen as time passes. In regards to divorce, the Korean church should provide a social-spiritual shelter to divorced young adults so that the young adults may experience healing and stay as vital members of the church.

It is crucial for the pastor and the entire church community to care for their young adults, especially when a marriage is crumbling. If the church is not open-minded about divorce people will have unpleasant and negative experiences in their church.

Currently, the Korean government and public organizations do not have as outstanding a support system as that of Western society. Church and pastor should work

together with the social service department of the Korean government and public organizations in order to help troubled divorced young adults. This can be a bridge between the church and the world for divorced young adults.

The church, with the help of God's grace, needs to develop a new perspective about divorce. The church needs to make efforts to change the negative attitude about divorced people into one that is positive, if not supportive. For this to happen, the church and pastor have to educate the entire church membership through preaching and Bible study. Many Korean Christians as Children of God's Word believe and follow the ways of preaching and Bible study.

The church should accept the divorced and help them to grow in God's love. Also, the church and pastor should recognize the divorced as part of the body of Christ and should give the divorced their space, according to their needs and their desires. For this, the church should invest in a ministry for divorced young adults because such an investment is showing the love and concern of the church and that all are brothers and

sisters in Jesus Christ.

I applied these two models of programs with a 500 member congregation in Southern California between divorced persons participated and the entire congregations was included in embracing them. I focused on combining the strengths of these two activities by noting the knowledge of the Bible study and the spiritual enlightenment of the retreat. When divorced young adults have a balance between knowledge and spiritual enlightenment, they will stay as vital members of the church.

During the progress of these two activities, the church showed some results. First, the entire church membership became involved, because divorced young adults started to participate in all church activities. Second, this environment brought growth to the church. Third, the church and entire membership have a dream for the future. The church will now plan to develop programs for the aging and for juvenile delinquents.

I hope that this type of effort becomes a seed of love and concern for others within and outside the church. Divorced young adults are a vital part of the future of the Korean church.



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